

# What Are Medicare Errors and Abuse?

In the summer edition of the *SMP Matters* newsletter we talked about what Medicare fraud is. It is when someone deliberately tricks, lies or deceives others to steal money from Medicare. This time, we will talk about what Medicare errors or mistakes and abuse are.

Medicare **abuse** is when people unknowingly or unintentionally misrepresent what actually happened or the type or level of sickness or condition people have to get more payment than they should. The different between fraud and abuse is intention. Fraud happens on purpose, but abuse can happen as an accident. A lot of times, though, abuse can start out as an accident, but turn into fraud over time.

## Examples of Medicare Abuse:

- Billing for services (procedures, tests or surgeries) or supplies that are not needed.
- Billing Medicare for services or supplies that do not meet professional standards. An example of this is charging hundreds of dollars for back, knee, or wrist braces or shoes that anyone could buy at a convenience store.
- Turning in more than one bill for the same services or supplies.

- Improper billing practices like billing Medicare patients more than non-Medicare patients

**Errors** are simple billing mistakes- its easy for medical billers to make mistakes. That's why its important to read your healthcare documents to make sure everything is right. Everyone reads their receipts from restaurants, do the same thing for Medicare!

If you ever have any questions about something that you don't recognize on your healthcare paperwork SMP can help you to sort it out, just give us a call at 502-574-6164 or toll-free at 1-877-603-6558— a real person will answer the phone!



Kentucky Senior  
Medicare Patrol

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# SMP Matters

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## Medicare and the Health Insurance Marketplaces

On October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment for health insurance exchanges (Marketplaces) begins through the Affordable Care Act or "Obamacare." This is the same month that Medicare's Open Enrollment starts for seniors to change their Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plans. Criminals use confusion seniors may have over what they need to do for these different programs to trick them into revealing their Medicare numbers through scams.

The Affordable Care Act has not made many changes to Medicare, but scam artists use the term "Obamacare" to trick seniors into thinking they need to do something. Because health insurance exchange enrollment through Marketplaces starts the same day as Medicare's Open Enrollment, seniors will be targeted by con-artists trying to steal their information. Marketplaces do not affect people's Medicare benefits in any way and you should hang up immediately if a callers tells you otherwise.

## Common Questions:

**How will Marketplaces affect my insurance?** Marketplaces help people who don't have any health insurance. You have health insurance through Medicare. The Marketplace won't have any effect on your Medicare coverage. Your Medicare benefits aren't changing. No matter how you get Medicare, whether

through Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage Plan, you'll still have the same benefits and security you have now, and you won't have to make any changes.

## What should I do if I'm contacted about signing up for a Marketplace plan?

- Medicare is not a part of the new Health Insurance Marketplace. It's against the law for someone who knows that you have Medicare to sell you a Marketplace plan.
- Marketplace Enrollment overlaps with Medicare Part D Enrollment. When you are making Medicare Part D plan changes should make sure you are reviewing Medicare plans and not Marketplace plans.
- DO NOT share your Medicare number or other personal information with anyone who knocks on your door or contacts you uninvited to sell you a health plan.



## From the Kentucky SMP– Alert System Scam



Kentucky seniors have been targeted by criminals through an alert system scam. "Help, I've fallen and I can't get up" is a well known phrase that we have heard over and over on the radio and television that advertises an alert product for seniors living alone. This product can be a life saver, but it is also easy for schemers "sell" things that sound alike but are actually scams.

There is a new scheme that is tricking seniors to get Medicare and bank account numbers. You get a phone call about an alert system that is free because your health insurance, the government or Medicare has already paid for it. All you need to do is confirm your information and pay for shipping. The offer sounds like a good deal! And since Medicare pays for it, why not get it? This is a good example of how someone can steal money from Medicare and you at the same time.

How does this scam work? The caller offers a free item, but

needs your information to confirm who you are. These callers do not actually have any alert systems, everything they said was a trick to get you to tell them your personal information. Once they have your Medicare number the scammer can send Medicare bills for things you don't need and will never get. The criminal also has your bank account number, which they said they needed to cover the shipping charges of your free alert system- so they can empty your bank account too.

What can you do to protect yourself and Medicare? Never give out your information over the phone and don't let strangers into your home to give a sales pitch. If you are interested in listening to a sales pitch or need a service, then have a family member or friend with you to give a second opinion. More importantly, call the Kentucky Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) at 502-574-6164 to see if these offers sound legitimate. Always feel free to report suspicious behavior to the Kentucky SMP.

### The SMP Mission

Empower & assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families & caregivers to prevent, detect & report healthcare fraud, errors & abuse through outreach, counseling & education.

### Have Questions?

Call us!  
1-877-603-6558  
Michelle: 502-574-6960  
Lauren: 502-574-6164

### Where we're going:

SMP is visiting Senior Centers in these counties this fall !

Martin	Knox	Letcher	Hardin
Wolfe	Monroe	Allen	Owsley
Jackson	Lincoln	Barren	Lee
Hart	Rockcastle	Breckinridge	

## Criminals Are Taking Advantage of Obamacare

"Con artists are always looking for new ways to trick you," states Dan Parsons, of the Better Business Bureau in Texas. "They take confusion over health care reform, usually referred to as 'Obamacare,' and turn it into cash." The best way to protect yourself and your identity is to never give out any personal information to anyone calling on the telephone. Medicare will not call you and they do not need your banking information to provide you Medicare coverage.

Here are two common scams:

1. A caller says they are a federal employee and you need a new federal health insurance card under the Affordable Care Act. To receive this card they need your social security number and your bank account number. There is no national insurance

card. Scammers use the part of the law that requires Americans to have health insurance, to scare people into giving them personal information.

2. Bogus insurance sales scams happen when someone calls or knocks at your door to make a sales pitch about their health insurance plan called "Obamacare." If anyone tries to sell you 'Obamacare' insurance, you know right away you need to hang up the phone or shut the door.

The best way to protect yourself, your Medicare benefits, and your identity is to never give your social security, Medicare, or banking account numbers to people who call on the phone or knock on your door. Always trust your instincts when deals, offers, or insurance sales pitch sound too good to be true.

## London, KY Doctor Arrested For Fraud

A cardiologist at St. Joseph's Hospital in London, KY recorded that his patients were sicker than they really were to bill Medicare and Medicaid for unneeded heart procedures. Dr. Sandesh Patil lied about the condition of his patient's arteries and heart stents.

Medicare and Medicaid only reimburse doctors for procedures that are medically needed. Stents are metal tubes that are surgically placed into a patient's arteries to improve blood flow. For a cardiac stent to be necessary a patient's artery must be blocked by 70%. Patil placed stents in arteries that had much less than 70% blockage but recorded blockages of 70% or more in his patient's records so he could bill Medicare and Medicaid for the surgeries.

Patil will serve a prison term between 30 and 37 months and St Joseph's hospital has repaid the government \$256,800 for his

cardiac stent surgeries.

Patil is the first cardiologist in Kentucky to be federally prosecuted for health care fraud related to heart stents. "Dr. Patil violated the public's trust in physicians," said Kerry B. Harvey, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of KY. "Patients...trust that physicians will accurately and honestly assess their medical condition. We will aggressively pursue any physician or provider that breaches this trust and places their own financial well-being ahead of the well-being of the patients." The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Kentucky Attorney General's and the Department of Health and Human Services.

